



Career Search Presentation 20th May 2009

The Chifley College
Shalvey
Experience

Determine target group

We decided to work with a small Year 10 Life Skills class. Firstly, as these students were doing the Work Education program and secondly; they were with me 4 x78 minutes per fortnight.

Introducing the project to the students

To introduce the concept we had a group discussion about careers, jobs and industries that they were aware of and or interested in. We brainstormed and used a variety of sources including the bullseyes posters, job guide, experiences, parents and families jobs etc

At this stage they wrote down a list of what they would like to investigate and those that had similar interests were then grouped together. Negotiation between the students began to narrow the field to one investigation per group. Group sizes initially were 3 in each group. Ultimately after negotiation with the students the four groups ended up being 2 x 4 and 2 x3.

Once groups were determined based on interest and cohesiveness, we introduced "Career Search" as a project or "assignment" that they would work on.

Next an outline of the whole process of Career Search from: "making choices, working as a team, investigating, communicating and presenting data to an audience. Stages outlined were:

- Choosing group based on similar interests
- Deciding what kind of information they wanted to know
- How to turn these into questions to ask employers
- How to find employers - internet, telephone directories, classified ads, family friends, local papers and advertisements
- Interviewing employers and co-workers
- Phone etiquette – making calls to organise a visit to a workplace
- Journal writing
- Presenting information to an audience
- Choosing the target audience
- Video recording, editing

Getting started on the Real project

Once the groups were determined and discussion narrowed the field to one “career” to research we needed to find potential employers to interview, students decided that there were many fields to one career and with their questioning they would be able to look at a variety of paths within the one career.

Students researched via the internet, telephone directories etc and made lists of around 4 or 5 employers to contact, they then ranked these according to a set of criteria.

Their criteria included such things as proximity to the school- some wanted to spend a whole day travelling to and from to investigate and others wanted to stay close where they knew the environment and community. Some wanted to talk to more than one employer to get more selection of responses. I didn't question their reasoning regarding the decisions but encouraged them to be practical and sensible about their choices.

The four project areas were:

- Hair and Beauty
- Reptile Handling
- Veterinary nurse and animal carers
- Childcare

The next step was to make initial contact with the employers, students found this extremely difficult, ultimately we had many role plays and practice about using the phone, eventually after times of giggling too much, handing the phone over mid call and hanging up before the phone was answered we had team meetings and eventually scripted an introductory greeting.

The following is a copy of the statement used by all but 1 of the groups. No group went word for word but this was something they could refer back to if they got stumped.

My name is----- I attend Chifley College Shalvey Campus. A group of Year 10 classmates and I are researching a career working with -----

Would it be possible for us to come and speak to someone about the types of jobs and education you need to work in this field.

We will need about 30minutes and would also like to take some photos

If you like we could send you a copy of the questions we would be asking.

Remember: You will need the name of the person you will be interviewing, their contact number, the date and time you can go.

The recording and evaluating process

Many lessons were then spent drafting, preparing and refining their questions and paperwork. This was the stage when their other Life Skills teachers were able to assist in the process, by talking to them, showing them their work etc and providing feedback, this meant that students were talking to their teachers and peers more. There was great value in having the support of others in this process.

We had decided that a journal was a useful tool for reflection, and recording of our progress, unfortunately, our students found it difficult and very frustrating; it became a battle most of the time. At the time we were completing our investigation "Big Brother" was on TV, someone came up with the idea that we should record our feelings and reflections like they do in the "Diary Room" on Big Brother, and hence our own diary room was created.

Even though the students were more confident verbalising their responses they became quite nervous about speaking to a camera. As for the phone conversation we created a script for the diary room entries.

Hi my name is _____.

Today's date is _____

I am still researching my career which is _____

In my group is _____

This is our last diary entry.

When we first started we felt _____

Now that is over I feel _____

<i>Issue</i>	<i>Strategy used to assist students</i>	<i>Recommendations</i>
Students not comfortable or confident with making phone calls	Script devised, lots of role play and practice prior to initial phone call	Know your student body, their strengths and weaknesses. If possible encourage students with confidence to work with those less confident.
Employers were reluctant to meet with students. Many on their list requested students forward their questions and they would respond via written correspondence	Encouraged to thank them and explain the importance of meeting with them and let employer know that they will keep them in mind.	Draft a letter outlining the purpose of the project and the skills that can be developed by participating in such a project, send via any communication method once students have selected the employers they wish to contact.
Many employers did not return phone calls, ringing them back often met with the response there was no record of them calling previously or the manager/owner not here please call back again	Remind students to identify themselves and ask the person on the other end of the phone to do the same	Use employers that are known to the school or students and identify who the contact person could be for such projects
Lack of interest or availability meant that students were often disheartened by the rejection	Constant encouragement. Eventually I needed to contact known employers and ask them to assist. Students were then encouraged to try again, this time speaking to the employers that I had already spoken to and this time they gained favourable responses and confidence.	Ask around, there are many people within our school communities who would love to assist by donating some time. Make a list; give this to the students as a starting point. The longer we are involved in this project the more employers we will have on board wanting to participate.

Reflection and record keeping in written format was a struggle, it led to frustration and a reluctance to participate	We used video diary entries both in groups and individually. Students recorded their feelings and reactions. Once they had verbalised their responses they were then able to write short reflections in their journals.	Be flexible in the manner in which you have students record their progress
Students were reluctant to present to a whole year cohort	Negotiated to present findings to a number of students of their choice (minimum 2 each), their class peers, teachers who had assisted throughout the project, parents and Consultant	Students definitely need to present findings. It was a valuable experience, but, allow them to have some control over the makeup of the audience, most of them have a great fear of public speaking
Method of presentation	Observe methods and styles of lesson delivery of class teachers. Brainstorm ways of learning about things in their surroundings	Look at ads, movies, worksheets and even music. Discuss what method provides the impact, colour, speed, information, music etc. What leaves the lasting impression? Encourage them to trial a few methods before choosing one. Some may like to combine a few, encourage creativity.
Meeting deadlines and achieving goals	The district developed journal allowed students to evaluate their progress and to determine a time frame. Like with most of us they needed constant reminding but their awareness of tasks being completed by a set time was valuable and generally kept.	Develop a timeline with them, make sure they outline individual tasks and give an estimate of how long they believe it will take. Remind them to self check each other and use each team members' strengths.

Team cohesiveness	This was a good group, very little issues with anyone not wanting to work with another student. One thing encountered was high absenteeism leaving one group reduced to two. These students had divided tasks and the two could not proceed when one was away for an extended period of time.	Ensure that when work is being stored, either on a computer or in a folder that all students can access the rest of the groups work if one is absent.
-------------------	---	---

This list is just a short reflection on some of the things that I encountered on my journey, every student cohort is unique. I have commenced this project with another Year 10 Life Skills group and already there are some differences in problems and solutions.

Expectations that they can achieve are of vital importance.

My group of students were renowned for poor behaviour, low academic achievement poor self esteem, they were unmotivated and definitely had no clear defined goals and retention rates were low.

Whilst Career Search was no magic wand or a miracle cure it involved students participating in activities that required them to step out of their comfort zone, to set goals, work as a team and most developed a sense of 'future' i.e. what is there after school and perhaps I have some control over my future.

Finally, one of the most impressive results and probably not a planned one was the fact that students learned a little patience and understanding. The "I want it NOW attitude, followed by tantrums etc gave way to an acceptance that we must wait our turn, we need to organise ourselves around others and patience and tolerance are good characteristics to develop.